DOCUMENTS REGARDING CULTURAL COMPETENCE
(Adapted from the HIV/AIDS Planning Council)

DEFINITION OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Culturally competent agencies have a mixture of policies, attitudes and practices which guide them to establish trust, communicate with others and provide services to all people who need them in their targeted communities.

Gaining cultural competence is a process of evaluating issues, values and biases as they relate to power, oppression and lack of access to services. This requires a willingness and ability to draw on community-based values, traditions and customs and to work with knowledgeable persons of and from the community in developing focused interventions, communications and other supports.

MEANS OF DEMONSTRATING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Goal: To ensure that every client receives culturally competent services within the system, respectful of race, ethnicity, health status, sexual orientation, gender, disability, age, religion and subculture.

Agencies may employ several strategies to improve their cultural competence. The following is a list of potential means an agency may adopt in their efforts to achieve this goal.

STAFF, VOLUNTEER AND BOARD ISSUES

1   Evaluate and assess agency staffing patterns to see if they represent cultural diversity reflective of the targeted community.
2.   Increase hiring of people of color.
3.   Provide diversity training sessions for staff, volunteers and board members that include client rights and policies.
4.   Develop and implement recruitment strategies that demonstrate sensitivity to the cultural needs of the population(s) being served. One example would be to hire someone who both speaks the language of the population and is comfortable in the culture.
5.   Provide training sessions to staff, volunteers and board members relevant to cultural competency issues.

PHYSICAL SPACE AND LOCATION

1 .   Review physical space, decor and printed materials to increase the comfort level of diverse client populations.
2.   Ensure that services are geographically accessible and sites are appropriately geographically located.
3.   Ensure that services are wheelchair accessible.
4.   Provide adequate signs (receptionist, waiting area, restrooms, directions) in several languages.

 AGENCY SYSTEMS

1. Develop and implement means of resolving disputes regarding cultural differences between clients and staff and between staff members themselves.
2. Create a system-wide Ombudsperson position to investigate client complaints and concerns which have not been resolved at the agency level.
3. Develop and implement a system for making appropriate and timely referrals to agencies which serve the specific population in need.
4. Establish formal linkages with other agencies; become familiar with the services they offer, eligibility criteria and agency procedures.
5. Perform an evaluation of inter-agency cooperation in order to improve the system.
6. Evaluate initial intake forms and client flow procedures for cultural competence; literacy levels and to ensure they empower and do not oppress clients.
7. Respect different cultural values and norms about time; allow appropriate time for completion of forms and for information to be provided.
8. Involve the community in the design of agency procedures and protocols.
9. Seek to include the community when defining services. Ask them what they need and want.
10. Redirect funds to address services gaps in under-served populations.
11. Make strategic use of needs assessment data in developing and evaluating programs in relation to serving communities in need.

OUTREACH AND ACCESS

1. Consult with the target population to develop marketing strategies to attract clients.
2. Perform appropriate outreach to those in need and to staff at other agencies.
3. Provide interpreter services for non-English speaking clients.
4. Identify and access interpreters who are trained in HIV/AIDS and sexuality issues.
5. Ensure that sign language interpretation is available to deaf and hearing impaired clients.
6. Develop a record of staff and agency abilities and of consultations provided to other agencies/groups.

CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

1. Develop collaborative projects with agencies representing targeted communities.
2. Be prepared to compensate these agencies, when appropriate, for their time and efforts. Do not always assume that their time and skills can be offered on a voluntary basis.